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U.N. demand for Gaza cease-fire provokes strongest clash between U.S. and Israel since war began



Gilad Erdan, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, addresses the United Nations Security Council at U.N. headquarters, Monday, March 25, 2024, after a vote that passed a cease-fire resolution in Gaza during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, its first demand to halt fighting.

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U.N. demand for Gaza cease-fire provokes strongest clash between U.S. and Israel since war began

From Front

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The United Nations Security Council on Monday issued its first demand for a cease-fire in Gaza, with the U.S. angering Israel by abstaining from the vote. Israel responded by canceling a visit to Washington by a high-level delegation in the strongest public clash between the allies since the war began.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the U.S. of "retreating" from a "principled position" by allowing the vote to pass without conditioning the cease-fire on the release of hostages held by Hamas. White House national security spokesman John Kirby said the administration was "kind of perplexed" by Netanyahu's decision. He said the Israelis were "choosing to create a perception of daylight here when they don't need to do that."

Kirby and the American ambassador to the U.N. said the U.S. abstained because the resolution did not condemn Hamas.

The 15-member council approved the resolution 14-0 after the U.S. decided not to use its veto power on the measure, which also demanded the release of all hostages taken captive during Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attack in southern Israel. The chamber broke into loud applause after the vote.

The U.S. vetoed past Security Council cease-fire resolutions in large part because of the failure to tie them directly to the release of hostages, the failure to condemn Hamas' attacks and the delicacy of ongoing negotiations. American officials have argued that the cease-fire and hostage releases are linked, while Russia, China and many other council members favored unconditional calls for cease-fires.

The resolution approved Monday demands the release of hostages but does not make it a condition for the cease-fire for the month of Ramadan, which ends in April.



Linda Thomas-Greenfield, United States Ambassador and Representative to the United Nations, speaks after a vote to abstain as the United Nations Security Council passed a cease-fire resolution in Gaza during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, its first demand to halt fighting at U.N. headquarters, Monday, March 25, 2024.

Associated Press

Hamas said it welcomed the U.N.'s move but said the cease-fire needs to be permanent.

"We confirm our readiness to engage in an immediate prisoner exchange process that leads to the release of prisoners on both sides," the group said. For months, the militants have sought a deal that includes a complete end to the conflict.

The U.S. decision to abstain comes at a time of growing tensions between President Joe Biden's administration and Netanyahu over Israel's prosecution of the war, the high number of civilian casualties and the limited amounts of humanitarian assistance reaching Gaza. The two countries have also clashed over Netanyahu's rejection of a Palestinian state, Jewish settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and the expansion of settlements there.

In addition, the well-known antagonism between Netanyahu and Biden — which dates from Biden's tenure as vice president — deepened after Biden questioned Israel's strategy in combating Hamas.

Then Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a Biden ally, suggested that Netanyahu was not operating in Israel's best interests and called

for Israel to hold new elections. Biden signaled his approval of Schumer's remarks, prompting a rebuke from Netanyahu.

During its U.S. visit, the Israeli delegation was to present White House officials with its plans for a possible ground invasion of Rafah, a city on the Egyptian border in southern Gaza where over 1 million Palestinian civilians have sought shelter from the war. The vote came after Russia and China vetoed a U.S.-sponsored resolution Friday that would have supported "an immediate and sustained cease-fire" in the Israeli-Hamas conflict. That resolution featured a weakened link between a cease-fire and the release of hostages, leaving it open to interpretation, and no time limit.

The United States warned that the resolution approved Monday could hurt negotiations to halt the hostilities, raising the possibility of another veto, this time by the Americans. The talks involve the U.S., Egypt and Qatar. Because Ramadan ends April 9, the cease-fire demand would last for just two weeks, though the draft says the pause in fighting should lead to "a sustainable cease-fire."

The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Linda Thomas-

Greenfield, said the resolution "spoke out in support of the ongoing diplomatic efforts," adding that negotiators were "getting closer" to a deal for a cease-fire with the release of all hostages, "but we're not there yet." She urged the council and U.N. members across the world to "speak out and demand unequivocally that Hamas accepts the deal on the table."

Thomas-Greenfield said the U.S. abstained because "certain edits" the U.S. requested were ignored, including a condemnation of Hamas. The resolution, put forward by the 10 elected council members, was backed by Russia and China and the 22-nation Arab Group at the United Nations.

Under the United Nations charter, Security Council resolutions are legally binding on its 193 member nations, though they are often flouted.

Algeria's U.N. ambassador, Amar Bendjama, the Arab representative on the council, thanked the council for "finally" demanding a cease-fire.

"We look forward to the commitment and the compliance of the Israeli occupying power with this resolution, for them to put an end to the bloodbath without any conditions, to end the suffering

of the Palestinian people," he said.

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, told the council that the vote "must be a turning point" that leads to saving lives in Gaza and ending the "assault of atrocities against our people."

Shortly before Monday's vote, the elected members changed the final draft resolution to drop the word "permanent" from its demand that a Ramadan cease-fire should lead to a "sustainable" halt in fighting apparently at the request of the United States.

Russia complained that dropping the word could allow Israel "to resume its military operation in the Gaza Strip at any moment" after Ramadan and proposed an amendment to restore it. That amendment was defeated because it failed to get the minimum nine "yes" vote — with three council members voting in favor, the United States voting against, and 11 countries abstaining. Since the start of the war, the Security Council has adopted two resolutions on the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, but none has called for a cease-fire. More than 32,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed during the fighting, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. The agency does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count, but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead. Gaza also faces a dire humanitarian emergency, with a report from an international authority on hunger warning March 18 that "famine is imminent" in northern Gaza and that escalation of the war could push half of the territory's 2.3 million people to the brink of starvation.

The United States has vetoed three resolutions demanding a cease-fire in Gaza, the most recent an Arab-backed measure on Feb. 20. That resolution was supported by 13 council members with one abstention, reflecting the overwhelming support for a cease-fire. □

Court agrees to pause collection of Trump's massive civil fraud judgment if he puts up \$175M

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISAK

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York appeals court on Monday agreed to hold off collection of former President Donald Trump's more than \$454 million civil fraud judgment if he puts up \$175 million within 10 days.

If Trump does, it will stop the clock on collection and prevent the state from seizing the presumptive Republican presidential nominee's assets while he appeals. The appeals court also halted other aspects of a trial judge's ruling that had barred Trump and his sons Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr., the family company's executive vice presidents, from serving in corporate leadership for several years.

In all, the order was a significant victory for the Republican ex-president as he defends the real estate empire that vaulted him into public life. The development came just before New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, was expected to initiate



Former President Donald Trump holds up a copy of a story featuring New York Attorney General Letitia James while speaking during a news conference, Jan. 11, 2024, in New York.

Associated Press

efforts to collect the judgment.

Trump, who was attending a separate hearing in his criminal hush money case in New York, hailed the ruling and said he would post a bond, securities or cash to cover the \$175 million sum in the civil case. Speaking in a courthouse

hallway, Trump revisited his oft-stated complaints about civil trial Judge Arthur Engoron and the penalty he imposed.

"What he's done is such a disservice and should never be allowed to happen again," said Trump, who argues that the fraud case is discouraging business in

New York.

James' office, meanwhile, noted that the judgment still stands, even if collection is paused.

"Donald Trump is still facing accountability for his staggering fraud," the office said in a statement.

Trump's lawyers had pleaded for a state appeals

court to halt collection, claiming it was "a practical impossibility" to get an underwriter to sign off on a bond for such a large sum, which grows daily because of interest.

The Trump attorneys had earlier proposed a \$100 million bond, but an appellate judge had said no late last month.

Monday's ruling came from a five-judge panel in the state's intermediate appeals court, called the Appellate Division, where Trump is fighting to overturn Engoron's Feb. 16 decision. Trump attorneys Alina Habba and Christopher Kise characterized Monday's ruling as a key first step.

Siding with the attorney general after a monthslong civil trial, Engoron found that Trump, his company and top executives lied about his wealth on financial statements, conning bankers and insurers who did business with him.

The statements valued Trump's penthouse for years as though it were nearly three times its actual size, for example. □

Analysis: Florida insurers made money last year for first time in 7 years

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Florida insurance companies made money last year for the first time in seven years, thanks to investment income and a mild hurricane season, according to an analysis conducted by S&P Global Market Intelligence. A group of around 50 insurers reported \$147.3 million in net income for 2023, compared to net losses of more than \$1 billion in each of the previous two years, according to the analysis released last week.

The group excluded state-backed Citizens Property Insurance Corp., which is the insurer of last resort for Florida homeowners unable to get a policy anywhere else.

Citizens is Florida's largest

underwriter of home insurance policies, with 1.2 million policies at the end of last year.

While the group of insurers still had collective underwriting losses of \$190.8 million, it was much smaller than in past years, when it was almost \$1.80 billion in 2022 and \$1.52 billion in 2021, S&P Global Market Intelligence said.

Florida has struggled to maintain stability in the state insurance market since 1992 when Hurricane Andrew flattened Homestead, wiped out some insurance carriers and left many remaining companies fearful to write or renew policies in Florida. Risks for carriers have also been growing as climate change

increases the strength of hurricanes and the intensity of rainstorms.

Last year, Farmers Insurance said it was discontinuing new coverage of auto, home and umbrella policies in Florida, and AAA said it had decided not to renew "a very small percentage" of homeowners and auto insurance policies.

Nine insurers have been declared insolvent or merged into other companies in Florida since 2021.

Average annual property insurance premiums jumped 42% last year to \$6,000 in Florida, compared to a national average of \$1,700.

The Legislature and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis grap-



Men walk past destroyed homes and debris as they survey damage to other properties, two days after the passage of Hurricane Ian, in Fort Myers Beach, Fla., on Sept. 30, 2022.

Associated Press

pled with the issue in 2021 and 2022, including holding a special session, but most of the focus was on shielding insurance companies from lawsuits and setting aside money for reinsurance to help protect insurers.

The insurance companies are optimistic that the

changes have reduced expenses, particularly the costs to litigate claims. Additionally, Florida regulators this year have approved six property and casualty insurers to start writing residential property insurance policies, S&P Global Market Intelligence said. □

Republicans threaten to hold Attorney General Garland in contempt over Biden documents case

By **FARNOUSH AMIRI**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP)—House Republicans threatened to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress if he did not turn over unredacted materials related to the special counsel probe into President Joe Biden's handling of classified documents.

In a letter Monday obtained by The Associated Press Reps. James Comer and Jim Jordan demanded that Garland comply with the subpoena the two Republican chairmen sent last month as part of their emerging investigation into Special Counsel Robert Hur's decision not to charge the president.

Comer, chair of the Oversight Committee, and Jordan, chair of the Judiciary Committee, ordered the Justice Department to turn over the unredacted audio and transcripts of Hur's hours-long interviews with Biden and his ghostwriter by April 8. "If you fail to



House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chairman Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., speaks during the House Oversight and Accountability Committee hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, March 20, 2024.

do so, the Committees will consider taking further action, such as the invocation of contempt of Congress proceedings," the two lawmakers wrote.

The threat is the latest escalation between Repub-

licans and the GOP-appointed federal prosecutor who appeared before lawmakers two weeks ago for a more than four-hour interrogation surrounding his 345-page report that questioned Biden's age and

mental competence but ultimately recommended no criminal charges for the 81-year-old president. Hur said that he found insufficient evidence to make a case that would stand up in court.

Associated Press

"What I wrote is what I believe the evidence shows, and what I expect jurors would perceive and believe," Hur said. "I did not sanitize my explanation. Nor did I disparage the president unfairly."

Despite his defense, Hur faced an onslaught of criticism from both sides of the aisle for the commentary in his report and the decision to withhold pressing charges against Biden.

Hours before his testimony, the Justice Department released a redacted transcript that provided a more nuanced picture of the roughly yearlong investigation, filling in some of the gaps left by Hur's and Biden's accounting of the exchanges.

Republicans, including Comer and Jordan, have insisted for the past year that unlike Biden, former President Donald Trump has been treated unfairly in his own Justice Department case for mishandling classified documents. □

Florida's DeSantis signs one of the country's most restrictive social media bans for minors

By **BRENDAN FARRINGTON**

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida will have one of the country's most restrictive social media bans for minors if it withstands expect-

ed legal challenges under a bill signed by Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Monday.

The bill will ban social media accounts for children under 14 and require pa-

rental permission for 15- and 16-year-olds. It was slightly watered down from a proposal DeSantis vetoed earlier this month, a week before the annual legislative session ended.

The new law was Republican Speaker Paul Renner's top legislative priority. It takes effect Jan. 1.

"A child in their brain development doesn't have the ability to know that they're being sucked into these addictive technologies and to see the harm and step away from it, and because of that we have to step in for them," Renner said at the bill-signing ceremony held at a Jacksonville school.

The bill DeSantis vetoed would have banned minors under 16 from popular social media platforms re-

gardless of parental consent. But before the veto, he worked out compromise language with Renner to alleviate the governor's concerns and the Legislature sent DeSantis a second bill. Several states have considered similar legislation. In Arkansas, a federal judge blocked enforcement of a law in August that required parental consent for minors to create new social media accounts.

Supporters in Florida hope the bill will withstand legal challenges because it would ban social media formats based on addictive features such as notification alerts and auto-play videos, rather than on their content.

Renner said he expects social media companies to "sue the second after

this is signed. But you know what? We're going to beat them. We're going to beat them and we're never, ever going to stop."

DeSantis also acknowledged the law will be challenged on First Amendment issues, and bemoaned the fact the "Stop Woke Act" he signed into law two years ago was recently struck down by an appeals court with a majority of Republican-appointed judges. They ruled it violated free speech rights by banning private business from including discussions about racial inequality in employee training.

"Any time I see a bill, if I don't think it's constitutional, I veto it," said DeSantis, a lawyer, expressing confidence that the social media ban will be upheld. □



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis applauds during a press conference at the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District headquarters at Walt Disney World, in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024.

Associated Press

US and UK announce sanctions over China-linked hacks on officials, lawmakers and election watchdog

By SYLVIA HUI
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.S. and British governments on Monday announced sanctions against a company and two individuals linked to the Chinese government over a string of malicious cyberactivity, detailing a yearslong state-backed operation that targeted officials, lawmakers and the U.K.'s election watchdog. British officials said those sanctioned are responsible for a hack that may have gained access to information on tens of millions of U.K. voters held by the Electoral Commission, as well as for cyberespionage targeting lawmakers who have been outspoken about threats from China.

The Foreign Office said the hack of the election registers "has not had an impact on electoral processes, has not affected the rights or access to the democratic process of any individual, nor has it affected electoral registration."

The Electoral Commission said in August that "hostile actors" had gained access to its servers from around 2021 to 2022.



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak attends a visit to an engineering firm in Barrow-in-Furness, England, Monday, March 25, 2024.

Associated Press

At the time, the watchdog said the data included the names and addresses of registered voters. But it said that much of the information was already in the public domain.

In Washington, the Treasury Department said it sanctioned Wuhan Xiaoruizhi Science and Technology Company Ltd., which it

calls a Chinese Ministry of State Security front company that has "served as cover for multiple malicious cyberoperations."

It named two Chinese nationals, Zhao Guangzong and Ni Gaobin, affiliated with the Wuhan company, for cyberoperations that targeted U.S. critical infrastructure sectors including

defense, aerospace and energy.

U.S. and British authorities said the two sanctioned individuals were involved in the operations of the Chinese cyber group APT31 an abbreviation for "advanced persistent threat." The group is also known as Zirconium or Hurricane Panda.

APT31 has previously been accused of targeting U.S. presidential campaigns and the information systems of Finland's parliament, among others.

The U.S. Justice Department charged Zhao, Ni, and five other hackers with conspiracy to commit computer intrusions and wire fraud. It said they were part of a 14-year long cyber operation "targeting U.S. and foreign critics, businesses, and political officials."

U.S. officials said the seven hackers and others in the APT31 group targeted thousands of U.S. and foreign individuals and companies, including staff in the White House, Treasury, Justice and State Departments, and politicians of both main political parties as well as their spouses.

"Today's announcements underscore the need to remain vigilant to cybersecurity threats and the potential for cyber-enabled foreign malign influence efforts, especially as we approach the 2024 election cycle," Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen said. □

A London court will rule on Tuesday whether WikiLeaks' Assange can challenge extradition to the U.S.

By BRIAN MELLEY
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A London court is due to rule whether WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange gets one final appeal in England to challenge extradition to the United States on espionage charges.

Two judges are scheduled to issue a judgment Tuesday morning in the High Court that could put an end to Assange's long legal saga — or extend it further.

If he fails in winning the right to appeal, his legal team fears he could be swiftly sent to the U.S. to face charges, though they're likely to ask the European

Court of Human Rights to block any transfer.

Assange, 52, has been indicted on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over his website's publication of a trove of classified U.S. documents almost 15 years ago.

American prosecutors allege that Assange encouraged and helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks published.

During a two-day hearing last month, Assange's lawyers argued that he was a secrecy-busting journalist who exposed U.S. military

wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sending him to the United States, they said, would expose him to a politically motivated prosecution and risk a "flagrant denial of justice."

The U.S. government said that Assange's actions went way beyond those of a journalist gathering information and put lives at risk in his bid to solicit, steal and indiscriminately publish classified government documents.

The Australian computer expert has been held in a British high-security prison for the past five years.

Assange's family and supporters say his physical and mental health have



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange being taken from court, where he appeared on charges of jumping British bail seven years ago, in London, Wednesday May 1, 2019.

Associated Press

suffered during more than a decade of legal battles, including taking refuge in

the Ecuadorian Embassy in London from 2012 until 2019. □

Death threats and security concerns hinder creation of council that will choose Haiti's next leader

By **BERT WILKINSON**
Associated Press
GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP) — Fresh turmoil involving a transitional presidential council that will be responsible for choosing Haiti's new leader triggered a flurry of meetings with Caribbean leaders and officials from the U.S., Canada and France, officials said Monday.

The council has yet to be sworn in given concerns over the security of its members, among other things, a regional official who was not authorized to talk to the media told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. The official is based in Guyana, which serves as headquarters for the regional trade bloc known as Caricom that is helping create the transitional council. The delay in establishing the council comes as gangs continue to launch attacks across Haiti's capital. Since Feb. 29, gunmen have burned police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that remains closed and stormed the country's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates.



Youth take cover after hearing gunshots at a public school that serves as a shelter for people displaced by gang violence, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Friday, March 22, 2024.

Associated Press

Scores of people have been killed, and more than 33,000 people have fled the capital of Port-au-Prince as a result of the attacks. On Sunday, the newest person chosen to represent the EDE/RED one of several Haitian political parties and groups with a seat on the nine-member council stepped down, forcing

the council to scramble to replace her. Dominique Dupuy, a UNESCO ambassador, said in a video statement that she resigned in part because she became the target of political attacks and death threats. In a statement posted Monday on X, formerly Twitter, the Montana Accord, a group of civil society lead-

ers that also has a seat on the council, said it supported Dupuy and her family "at a time when she is being persecuted and threatened." "Society must remain vigilant about all political maneuvers based on fear and terror," it said. "It's time for us to stop the violence." Dupuy was quickly re-

placed, bringing the council back up to its full nine members, seven of which have voting powers, but they have yet to be sworn in. It wasn't immediately clear when the council would be formally announced, with another meeting scheduled Monday between its members and officials with Caricom. Officials are hoping rampant gang violence will subside once the council selects a new leader for Haiti and appoints a council of ministers. Prime Minister Ariel Henry has said he would resign when the council is created.

While gang violence has somewhat subsided in recent days, gunmen set fire to a large, open-air garage in downtown Port-au-Prince on Sunday.

"A lot of people have lost everything," attorney Joseph James said. "We couldn't save anything." On Monday morning, mechanic Elidor Samuel rummaged through the scorched earth in hopes of finding some belongings that might be salvageable. "All my tools have been burnt," he said. □

More than 130 abducted schoolchildren in Nigeria are returning home after weeks in captivity

By **CHINEDU ASADU**
Associated Press
KADUNA, Nigeria (AP) — More than 130 Nigerian

schoolchildren rescued after more than two weeks in captivity arrived Monday in their home state in north-

western Nigeria ahead of their anticipated reunions with families, following the latest in a series of mass school abductions in the West African nation.

Six of the 137 students remain in hospital, and one staff member who was abducted along with the children died in captivity, military officials said.

The children were seized by motorcycle-riding gunmen at their school in the remote Kaduna state town of Kuriga on March 7, triggering a wide-ranging rescue operation. They were rescued Sunday by the military in a forest about 200 kilometers (more than 120 miles) to the north in neighboring Zamfara state, though au-

thorities have provided no details of the rescue or said whether any suspected kidnappers were arrested.

The students, many of them below the age of 10, were brought Monday to the Kaduna State Government House with fresh haircuts and newly sewn clothes and footwear their first change of clothing since their abduction.

The six children still in hospital will be made available "as soon as the doctors have certified them fit enough," Maj. Gen. Mayirensa Saraso, a military chief in Kaduna, said while handing them over to the government.

School authorities originally had told the state govern-

ment that a total of 287 students were kidnapped during the attack. However, Kaduna Gov. Uba Sani said only 137 are confirmed to have been seized.

"We are here today happily and celebrating the safe return of our children. They will soon be with their family and their parents," Gov. Sani said. Their parents were not available to receive them and authorities did not allow the schoolchildren to speak to reporters. The Associated Press could not reach families in Kuriga town, which does not have cellphone service.

But one parent on Sunday spoke of their sleepless nights as they waited for the return of the children. □



The freed students of the LEA Primary and Secondary School Kuriga upon their arrival at the state government house in Kaduna, Nigeria, Monday, March 25, 2024.

Associated Press

Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the time, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life)*, "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with



only one way to generate profit at the time for the subsistence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experienced by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.

Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much

trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island in the mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piternella, as well as migrant authors José

Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness within the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu,

but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/ Dera Gai (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. □

Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas



Exploring the Mainstreet of San Nicolas

SAN NICOLAS— At Just 11 miles southeast from Oranjestad you will enter the city San Nicolas, also known as Sunrise City or Chocolate City. A city that is rich in authentic culture and island charm. San Nicolas is Aruba's second largest city and was once a bustling company town dominated by the oil industry since the early 1930's.



Over the course of four decades, its demographics had changed immensely due to a stream of Afro-Caribbean and South American workers who came to fill the jobs in the oil refinery between the 1920's until the 1960's. To this day traces of the multicultural influences in culinary offerings and customs, housing and population are clearly visible in San Nicolas - more than anywhere else on the island.

Flow of history

if you are looking for history San Nicolas has it. Here you will find three amazing museums, The Museum of Industry, the Community Museum and the Carnival Euphoria, all within walking distance from one another.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial

history which began in the 19th century. Here you will learn about gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and the tourism industries which made San Nicolas once a bustling business center. Experience the touching stories of those who were part of this history.

Nicolaas Store built in 1940 and renovated in 2014 is the home of the Community Museum. The collection is remarkable and spans millennia. Ancient fossils stand next to tableaus of an authentically recreated colonial kitchen and bedroom and 19th-century barbershop, just to name a few of the items of old-time Aruba that has been preserved. A collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific

importance can be found here for the purpose of education or enjoyment.

Carnival Euphoria is showcasing Aruba's Carnival. See how are Carnival has developed over the past 65 years.

The new San Nicolas

In the shadow of the refinery, an art capital is quietly beginning to grow. This is the new San Nicolas, a place that is starting to become a magnet for all that is young, cool and hip in Aruba. Indeed, San Nicolas has all of the ingredients of an emerging cultural hub — varied history, interesting architecture, and, perhaps most importantly, an urban layout that makes it walkable. As you walk around, the streets are silent but the walls are loud, filled with bright, colorful murals painted by a collection of artists from around the world. Thanks to the efforts of various art organizations in Aruba, such as Art Rules Aruba and Aruba Art Fair, San Nicolas has had quite the aesthetic makeover with regards to vibrant street art. Each year more and more stunning murals are replacing broken down buildings with colorful art pieces that keep brightening up SunriseCity.



Must See, Do, Buy & Eat

A little bit of everything can be found in the main street. Stores selling shoes, clothing, jewelry you name it. Arts & crafts by Cosecha store & Creative Center, a design store in which you can immerse yourself in discovering genuine and locally made arts and crafts which reflect the diversification of the Aruban craft heritage and the artistic supply of artisans. Don't miss out on trying the exquisite food offered by the cafes and restaurants or just enjoy a peaceful walk admiring the murals, mosaic benches and all the history San Nicolas has to offer. □

Aruban snacks and where to find them

ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change? How about some Aruban snacks that you can find all around the island? Hop in your car, and go to these locations to find some of the most popular and tasty snacks that are beloved by our locals.

One of the staples of Aruban cuisine and snacks is the Pastechi. Pastechi is a Caribbean fried pastry that is filled with cheese, meat,

chicken, veggies and sometimes even fish! Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, locally called a "kroket," which is a crusty fried snack with typically a meat and dough mix filling. The Aruban kroket is based on its Dutch counterpart, the "bitterbal".

These two snacks are typically found in all local snack trucks, which can be found all over the island, including on the side of the main road

that stretches from San Nicolas to the Hotel Area. You can also find pastechis and krokets at local bakeries and snack shops, like Bright Bakery in Piedra Plat, Huchada in Santa Cruz or Pastechi House in the city center. These places may also sell other snacks and sandwiches too, perfect for on-the-road lunch break.

While you're at it, why not accompany your snack with a refreshing "batido"? Batidos are fruit shakes, typically made with added milk for some creaminess. However, you can also ask to hold the milk. Batidos are commonly found in snack shops too. You may find some batido shops next the flea markets downtown, or if you're on your way to San Nicolas, at Mauchi Smoothies and Juice Bar in Savaneta (located at the side of the main road).

If you are looking for something a bit more fresh and



healthy, why not try some coconuts, or shaved ice from local vendors? These vendors carry their little shop at the back of their truck, so they are ever-moving around the island. However, there are a few spots where you can almost always find a coconut/shaved ice vendor:

1. Right next to the Red Anchor in San Nicolas, on the way to Baby Beach.
2. Along the main road next to the airport field.
3. At the California

Light House.

4. At the Alto Vista Chapel.

These vendors may also sell other delights, like the beloved coconut-based dessert "cocada" or peanuts. All in all, in Aruba, you can always find some place to take a break and have a bite of something local, you maybe just might have to look for them! □

Photo credit: wheninaruba.com



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Unique fauna of Aruba

For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some sub-species of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cunicularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing.

The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the Shoco is either white or

light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color.

The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover. □

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/>

The district of Savaneta

A quick history guide to the island's first capital

(Oranjestad)—Before Oranjestad became the island nation's capital, Aruba's first capital was the district of Savaneta. Here is where the cultural identity of Aruba was born, and from where the rest of the island developed into what it is today.

Savaneta is said to have been the first place where the Caquetio inhabitants first stepped foot on the island. Though there isn't hard evidence to back this up, but considering the legend of the Cacique Arua, it is believed that there were already movements on Aruba—and Savaneta—around 88 AD.

The Caquetios probably made their way to the island either from Venezuela, Colombia or other Caribbean islands in the region, but with good weather it was relatively easy for them to travel back and forth in their canoes. So, since the Caquetios discovered the island, Aruba found her first form of civilization.

It wasn't until 1499 when Aruba met another group of people who set foot on the island: the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda. De Ojeda first took notice of Aruba off the coast of Venezuela, during his exploration of the Latin American country. This was on August 9th, 1499. However, de Ojeda didn't actually sail to the island till 4 days later, on August 23rd, 1499. This was the beginning of the Spanish era on Aruba (1499-1636).

Alonso usually didn't stop at every island or land he saw, especially not in the Caribbean. He would often take notice of land from afar and continue sailing. However,

Aruba was an exception. He had heard that there were "quebracho" trees on the island, which were commonly used to produce dye or paint. But since these trees could not be found in Savaneta, he continued to search in the area of what is now known as Santa Cruz. The best way to transport the tree barks was via a route passing through Savaneta, and so the first road between Savaneta and Santa Cruz was made.

The Dutch colonial era (1636-1805)

During the 80-year war between The Netherlands and Spain, Dutch explorers and merchants began to travel to the ABC islands. Once they landed in Aruba, they deported the small Arawakan and Spanish community that was living on the island. This was the beginning of colonization of the ABC islands by the Dutch empire. Around the same, the West Indian Company (WIC) was born. Bonaire and Curacao were mostly used for plantations, where the Dutch had transported slaves from Africa. Aruba, on the other hand, was mostly used to raise cattle and to house the haring factory. The Dutch had often forced the indigenous community to work for them.

In 1636, when the Netherlands won the war against Spain, the country surrendered the islands to the Dutch.

The Dutch administration appointed the island's first commander, an Irish man named N. Williams. Because the Dutch were interested in other Caribbean islands and countries in South America, they imported Dutch merchants and business



Commandeursbaai (Commander's Bay) at Savaneta

men, all of whom resided in Savaneta. This way, Savaneta officially became the island's first capital.

However, at the end of the 18th century, the commander at the time, J.R. Lauffer, moved his office to what is now "Horse Bay" in Oranjestad. Because the highest office on the island moved away from Savaneta, the capital lost its title to what was called then Playa.

How Savaneta got its name

The name Savaneta probably has a Spanish origin. It was said that when the Spanish climbed a hill called Yara, they saw that the area was mostly open and had no big trees. In Spanish, such a land area is called a "sabana".

Because of its land surface, Sava-

neta was a great place to construct cattle farms. From here, the farmer culture on Aruba was born. Before the Aruban Gold Rush and the construction of the Refinery in San Nicolas, most residents were farmers, and Savaneta had many inhabitants that farmed fruits and vegetables. They also continued the tradition of raising cattle, like goat, sheep, pigs and horses. Savaneta was one of the first places on the island to have a general farming culture. From this culture, many other traditions were born, like the Dera Gay Holiday that we celebrate every year on June 24th. □

Source: Historia di Savaneta (History of Savaneta) by Adolf "Duffi" Kock.



Alonso de Ojeda



"Quebracho" (Kibrahacha) tree; used to make dye and paint

The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history

(Oranjestad)—The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins is one of the most visited places by tourists on the island, as it lies along the northern coast line near the mini pool and on the way to the Natural Bridge. Despite its seemingly plain appearance, this ruin represents one of the most important histories of the island: The Aruban Gold Rush.

Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was found by locals. The story of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first exploration for gold on the island was commis-

sioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started search-

ing for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was found.

At the same time, the Aruban government took immediate actions, and informed Curacao that gold was found. At first, everyone could look for gold, as long as they sold it to the government. However, after some time, the government decided to implement stricter rules and banned local search parties.

Over the years, concession-holding had seen different companies from around the world, all of which used primitive methods to dig and carve out gold from the rocks. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd.



was no different, but used a unique method that involved grinding the rocks and letting the dust be blown away by the strong northeast wind, leaving clumps of gold behind. The next step was melting the gold and letting it attach to quicksilver in order to obtain pure gold. All these processes were done at

the Bushiribana Gold Mill.

The gold mill itself had a short life-span: only 10 years in service, but its structure remained relatively solid till this day, and is now a historical remnant.

Sources: Etnia Nativa & gold-mineranch.com.

Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations



(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your "off-road" trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations as just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.

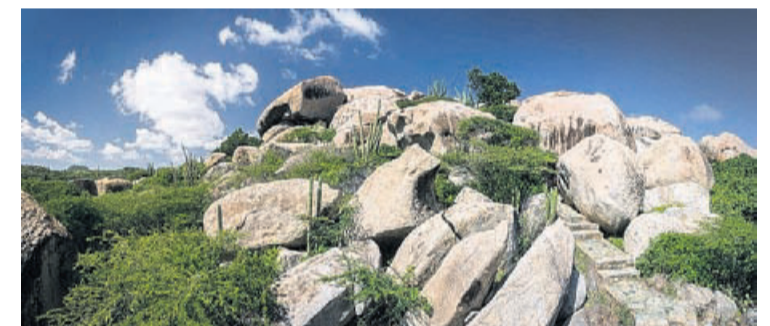
Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding "mondi"*. This



is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the

Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of



comfort and peace.

Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Forma-

tion is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat bolder. For this position, you can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south. Right in front of the entrance, there is the Casibari Café and Grill, a great place to get refreshments and snack before continuing your off-road adventure!

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way!

*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi! □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

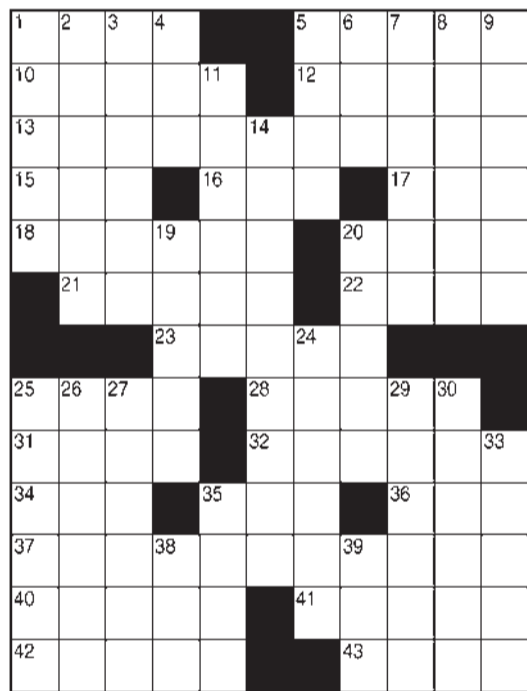
- ACROSS**
- 40 Correct, as text
 - 1 High point
 - 5 Fleet makeup
 - 10 Casual talks
 - 12 Athlete's TV
 - 13 Trip and fall
 - 15 Count start
 - 16 Flying mammal
 - 17 Under the weather
 - 18 Comment
 - 20 Aid in crime
 - 21 Embankment
 - 22 Eye part
 - 23 Missouri tribe
 - 25 Use incisors
 - 28 Trunk
 - 31 Bleachers features
 - 32 Says
 - 34 Santa — winds
 - 35 Old hand
 - 36 Mardi Gras city
 - 37 "Join the club!"

DOWN

- 1 Cast member
- 2 Designer Coco
- 3 Challenging words
- 4 Summer on the Seine
- 5 Close
- 6 That fellow
- 7 Drink
- 8 Common allergen
- 9 Does refinery work
- 11 Buffalo nation
- 14 Roll the dice, say
- 19 Attests
- 20 Watchful
- 24 Became known
- 25 Drain covers
- 26 Generic
- 27 Come to
- 29 Belgrade's
- 30 Set
- 33 Catego-rizes
- 35 Knee
- 38 Finale
- 39 Travel aid



Yesterday's answer



3-26

AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-26

CRYPTOQUOTE

YJR AE ZYIRV FRGBWER YJR
 AE ZYIRV JY KRB EYJ AE
 JRRVRV QYK ZYIAJN

— OBWZY GYZXY

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: SPRINGTIME IS THE LAND AWAKENING. THE MARCH WINDS ARE THE MORNING YAWN. — LEWIS GRIZZARD

Cruise ship Schedule: Mar 26 - Mar 30 2024

TUE	26	CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	1
WED	27	CELEBRITY EQUINOX SYMPHONY OF THE SEAS	10.00 08.00	23.59 21.00	1 1
THU	28	SEVEN SEAS GRANDEUR RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	22.00	1 1
FRI	29	REGAL PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	1
SAT	30	AIDAPERLA STAR CLIPPER	08.00 10.00	18.00 19.00	1 1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong,

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Q&A: How Shakira turned pain into art on her first album in seven years, 'Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran'

By **MARIA SHERMAN**

AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Shakira, the boundary-breaking Colombian performer, has been remarkably consistent since beginning her career in the early '90s. Without fail, she toured, released albums, won awards, woven global, genre-defying sounds into her pioneering singles, performed at the Super Bowl halftime show and more. Then, things slowed. Or so it appeared. In reality, the last few years haven't been kind to Shakira. In 2022, after 11 years and two children together, she separated from soccer player Gerard Piqué, leading to what she's called the "dissolution of my family." She faced charges of tax evasion in Spain; in November 2023, she received a suspended three-year sentence and paid a fine of 7.3 million euros (\$8 million) in addition to previously unpaid taxes and interest.

On "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran," her first new album in seven years, Shakira transforms her pain into art from the bachata "Monotonía" to the electro-pop "Te Felicito" to the mega viral "Shakira: Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53" and beyond. "I've been through so much in these past few years that I had to literally pick up the pieces of myself and put them back together," Shakira told The Associated Press over Zoom from Miami. "And during that process, I think that music was the glue."

This interview edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: It has been seven years since your last album, "El Dorado." What did you learn about yourself, musically, in that time?

SHAKIRA: Well, in those seven years I've been raising kids, I've been learning a lot about myself as a mother, as a woman. But I've also been making music. It's just that it's been more of a sporadic thing, you know, here and there. Whenever I had a chance to put out a song, I did that.



Shakira celebrates the official release of her new album, "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran," early Friday, March 22, 2024, in Hollywood, Fla.

But I didn't have the time to really put a whole body of work. This time, it was a compulsion and a need. It was really important for me to be able to express, in and through these songs, so many life experiences and to find catharsis, you know, and to be able to find the therapeutic effects of writing and see myself back in the studio.

AP: You've called "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran" a concept album. What story is it telling?

SHAKIRA: Because there's a great diversity in this album I know it's a conceptual album but it didn't happen on purpose. Nobody chooses to go through the kind of life experiences that I went through when I was writing and creating this album, you know, life gives you lemons. So what do you do? Make lemonade. So I made songs. But there is a great variety within this album. There's pop, there's Afrobeat, there's reggaeton. There's some Mexican regionals as well. Rock. But there is a common thread. And that is based off of

genuine, authentic life experiences and the process of elaborating those intense emotions and feelings that I've been having to deal with during this past couple of years.

AP: You're no stranger to embracing global sounds. On this album, you worked with Grupo Frontera and Fuerza Regida two regional Mexican artists who are bringing their music to the global stage. That's something you know a thing or two about.

SHAKIRA: When I first started out in this industry, it was predominantly male. It was difficult for a Colombian girl. I had to knock (on) so many doors, just do a lot of convincing. Convince all the gatekeepers, the directors of radio stations who would decide back in the day, who would like what music would get programmed, what music wouldn't.

But now it is different, you know, now people decide for themselves. I think music has been democratized in a way. And that's why, Latin artists have really, found a

platform for their music not like it was 10, 20 years ago...

And now, Latin artists have a lot more opportunities. And it's true that the Mexican regional artists are also among that group of artists that are now being played in so many more stations in Colombia and other places of the world and here in the United States as well.

Mexico has been such an important part of my career. It's a country that I owe so much to. And it's been just a wonderful experience to be able to collaborate with some Mexican artists as well on this album.

It's my small homage to Mexican music, that genre and to the Mexican people.

AP: "She Wolf" turns 15 this year. As a listener, that album felt like a shift in your career and so does this one.

Do you see parallels?

SHAKIRA: I do, because it is the renaissance of the "She Wolf," in a way. It is the rebirth of that primal force that I feel that all women have within ourselves. It's

that force that allows us to give birth, feed our offsprings, guarantee their survival of their species, fight whatever fight we have to fight against.

I had to resort to that She Wolf within me to be able to survive.

I was in a fight or flight sort of mode for a while and I think it is that She Wolf" within us women today that is taking society to where it's going, you know, at the moment. Women are natural multitaskers. We can do everything. We can really survive wars and rebuild cities after they're destroyed. So, my life was in pieces after, you know, the dissolution of my family, and so many other things that I had to go through.

That's why this album is called "Women No Longer Cry." Because I feel that women, you know, for ages have been sent to cry with a script in their hands. And just because we women conceal our emotions in front of our kids and just show good manners and accept it all, and now it's different. I think that as women now we decide when to cry, when not to cry and how to do it, if we decide to cry. So, it's like no one has to tell us how to heal.

AP: I haven't seen anyone refer to this as a "divorce album."

SHAKIRA: This is not a divorce album. It's an album that gathers many different life experiences, that gathers the transformation of vulnerability into resilience, the empowerment of finding your strength.

It doesn't only talk about pain; it also talks about triumph.

And that's why these tears are not tears made of resentment anger or just sadness, but tears of triumph and tears of self-recognition and finding confidence within.

It's not linear. There's ups and downs and valleys and peaks. And this album is made of all of those dynamics. □

Another Byron win has Hendrick on a roll heading toward NASCAR team's 40th anniversary party

By **JIM VERTUNO**
AP Sports Writer

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Hendrick Motorsports has a lot to be happy about as the team barrels toward its big 40th anniversary celebration in two weeks.

William Byron dominated on Sunday in his second win of the NASCAR season, which came at the Circuit of the Americas. Alex Bowman earned his third top-four finish of 2024 at COTA, and Kyle Larson snatched a wild Xfinity Series win on Saturday.

That's quite a roll ahead of the team's planned celebrations for race weekend at Martinsville Speedway, where Hendrick Motorsports claimed its first win with Geoff Bodine in 1984 when it raced under the name All-Star Racing.

The racing so far has produced its own party.

Byron is the only two-time winner through the first six races of the season. The first came at the Daytona 500, where Bowman gave Hendrick a 1-2 finish at NASCAR's showcase race.

Byron's victory at COTA was career win No. 12 and his first from pole position.

"I mean, just watching him qualify, how smooth he was. Same thing through-



William Byron celebrates after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race Sunday, March 24, 2024, at Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas.

out the race. Just seemed to put the car in all the right places," Hendrick Motorsports Vice Chairman Jeff Gordon said. "A lot of credit to William in doing that great job. Takes the whole team, the pit crew, everybody. They're truly on quite a run here to start this season off. Can't wait to see where they take it next."

The series moves to the short track at Richmond next week before Martinsville on April 7.

"We're going to shoot for the stars," said Byron's crew chief, Rudy Fogle.

Hendrick will want a good showing at Martinsville, where team cars will sport special red paint schemes, owner Rick Hendrick will drive the pace car and Bodine and Gordon will be the grand marshals.

A Hendrick driver has won a race at Martinsville each of the last four years. The teams' 28 overall Cup Series wins there are the most

for the organization at any track on the circuit.

"Obviously Martinsville is big for the 40th anniversary," Bowman said.

Bowman won there in 2021 and has delivered big results in a season when he needed to. He hasn't won since 2022, had the last two seasons marred by injuries and missed the playoff in 2023.

"I don't want to say, 'Yeah, we're back here 100%,' but these last few weeks have

been a step in the right direction," Bowman said.

"I'm personally working as hard as I've ever worked," he said. "This year, I'm all in in every aspect of everything, whether it's extra shifts in the (simulator), or correlating the tires, spending more time with the team or training in the gym." Larson's Xfinity win was a surprise even after he took pole position. He had to start from the back because his team had to replace a broken brake rotor, but he managed to fight his way through and snatch the win in overtime.

Larson was the first driver in a NASCAR series to win the pole and the race but lead only one lap while doing so. His win was the first for Hendrick Motorsports in Xfinity since the team returned to the series in 2022.

The only blemish to Hendrick's big weekend was that Larson's 17th-place finish in Sunday's race dropped him out of the lead in the Cup Series standings. Larson is now fifth, just ahead of Byron.

All four Hendrick drivers are in the top 11, but Joe Gibbs Racing drivers Martin Truex Jr. and Ty Gibbs are the new 1-2 in the season championship. □

Associated Press

Winnipeg Jets look to rediscover some consistency as they aim for a long playoff run

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
AP Hockey Writer

When the Winnipeg Jets are at their best, they play a suffocating brand of hockey built around defense with elite goaltending and plenty of scoring depth.

That was not the case for long stretches at the end of their most recent road trip, which finished on a three-game losing streak. They return home for a five-game stretch looking to regain some consistency with the aim of going on a long playoff run this spring.

"We've got to worry about us, worry about our process, make sure that we're con-

sistent with our details, our compete and our execution," defenseman Dylan DeMelo said after a 3-0 defeat at Washington on Sunday. "That has wavered here in this last stretch. We haven't been as consistent as we'd like to be. If our process is right, we feel confident in going against anybody in any building."

For long stretches this season, the Jets have looked like a powerhouse capable of beating anyone in the NHL, a heavyweight Stanley Cup contender from the net out. Top center Mark Scheifele is producing at a point-a-game level, Kyle Connor

has scored 30 goals and Connor Hellebuyck is on track for another Vezina Trophy season as the league's top goalie. Winnipeg has allowed the second-fewest goals of any team.

Allowing 13 goals in losses at the New Jersey Devils, New York Islanders and Capitals was about as out of character as it gets.

"Our details have to be better a lot better than we've shown," said assistant Scott Arniel, who filled in for coach Rick Bowness during absences last week and earlier in the season for family or personal medical reasons. □



New York Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin, in background, watches as Winnipeg Jets center Mark Scheifele (55) celebrates after scoring with his teammates after scoring during the second period of an NHL hockey game, Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at Madison Square Garden in New York.

Associated Press

MLB baserunners went wild last summer. In Year 2 with new rules, steals could keep piling up

By **ROB MAADDI**
AP Sports Writer

CLEARWATER, Fla. (AP) —

Trea Turner's speed and instincts helped him go perfect on the bases.

The Philadelphia Phillies' star shortstop set a major league record for most steals in a season without getting caught, going 30-for-30 on the basepaths last year.

He wasn't the only player who had a lot of success.

Thanks to several rules changes, runners swiped bags more proficiently and stolen bases across the majors increased 41% from 2,486 in 2022 to 3,503 in 2023. That was the most in a season since 1987.

Overall, basestealers had a success rate of 80.2%, up from 75.4% in 2022. Turner is one of only six players in MLB history to steal at least 20 bases in a season at a 100% rate.

National League MVP Ronald Acuña Jr. led the major with 73 steals, the most since Jose Reyes had 78 in 2007. Esteury Ruiz swiped 67 and Corbin Carroll stole 54. "There's a lot that goes into it, the count, how many outs, the score, who's hitting behind you, knowing the pitcher, how well do you read him, the catcher's tendencies," Turner said earlier this month about the art of stealing bases. "You just gotta be comfortable making it. I think it's a lot of rhythm. I look at it as hitting or fielding where it's like, sometimes I feel stuck and I can't see it. And then sometimes you're seeing everything so quick, you know I got this easy."

The main reason stolen bases went up was the new rule limiting pitchers to two disengagements per batter. Pitchers can only disengage from the pitching rubber either to call timeout or to attempt a pickoff throw twice per plate appearance. If a runner advances during a plate appearance, the limit on disengagements is reset.

"When you limit pickoff attempts, that makes it so



Philadelphia Phillies' Trea Turner steals third base on his way to score on an RBI by Nick Castellanos during the fifth inning of a baseball game against the New York Mets, Sunday, June 25, 2023, in Philadelphia.

much easier," Turner said. Bryson Stott, Turner's teammate and double-play partner, swiped 31 bags in 34 tries last season. He said the disengagement rule allowed him to be more aggressive on the bases.

"I still have to get a jump off the pitcher and still have to beat the catcher's throw and it's still the same catchers who were throwing out 50 guys a season ago," Stott said. "But I think you're more comfortable in knowing that they don't want to waste a pickoff in certain spots so your leads can be a little bigger, you can take more chances."

"If Bryce Harper is at the plate and I'm on first base and the pitcher has two stepoffs, is he going to waste a stepoff on me or does he want to step off, gather his thoughts and see what he wants to throw Bryce? So it's just certain things throughout the game that kind of affect that."

Other rule changes also contributed to some degree to the rise in steals. A pitch clock implemented to speed up games forced pitchers to start their deliv-

ery in 20 seconds if there was a baserunner. The time is decreasing to 18 seconds this season.

"I actually thought the clock would be a little bit more important than it was," Turner said. "I didn't think it was as easy to time it up with the clock as I thought at first."

Larger bases were introduced to improve player safety and encourage more steals. Bases went up to 18-square inches from 15-square inches.

"Maybe it made a difference on a handful of plays that were bang-bang but limiting pickoffs was the important factor," Turner said. The big question: what happens in Year 2 with the new rules? Baserunners and their coaches are bracing for pitchers and catchers to make adjustments.

"Teams are going to find ways to try to eliminate them," said Paco Figueroa, the Phillies' first base/baserunning/outfield coach. "Maybe pitchers will use the second or third pickoff more, or maybe pitchers need to start being quicker to the plate."

Pitchers are permitted a third pickoff try, but it's a balk if the runner returns safely. Holding runners on base was a point of emphasis this spring for Chicago White Sox right-hander Michael Kopech, who gave up 32 stolen bases, second-most in the majors last season.

"We've worked on the slide-step a little bit," said Kopech, who gave up 15 steals in 2022. "But for me, there's more of a comfort zone with the modified leg lift than a true slide step. It's just being quick to the plate without being rushed."

Cubs right-hander Kyle Hendricks also needed to address how to hold runners better after his steals allowed went up from nine in 2022 to 23 in last season. "Big-time focus on it at all times," Hendricks said. "Throwing my bullpen, there's a focus on it, of looking the same in the stretch every time, not giving a different look or anything that could tip off the runner to get an early jump, and just making sure you're quick to the plate."

"It's gonna be really tough."

We know there's going to be a lot of running in the game, so it's definitely a focus of ours. Just going to have to really be hyper aware of it, and hyper aware of yourself if you're tipping anything to give them a chance to get off early, and then making sure you're quick enough to the plate to give our guys a chance."

Some players are taking a different approach on the basepaths. New York Yankees rookie shortstop Anthony Volpe uses a vault or momentum lead, which is more widely used in college ball. Instead of the typical three-to-four step lead, Volpe takes a small, two-step lead and then shuffles before taking off.

He led the Yankees with 24 steals but also was caught five times.

"I personally can't do it," Stott said. "I worry that the second I take a jump, they're going to pick me off. That is an art, and he's really good at it. He's under control with it. You see a lot of guys who are doing the jump lead and they accidentally jump seven feet and then the pitcher is still holding the ball."

"But his leads aren't very big and he takes the jump step and he knows the pitchers. I think a lot of guys are starting to pick up on that and seeing how he was kind of running wild."

New rules. Different ideas. More running. It all adds excitement to baseball. □

Associated Press

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